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Nevertheless, his conclusion that “the social prestige of the physician in Rome, just as much as in contemporary Greece, was considerably elevated (‘recht hoch’)”, seems to me in no way borne out by the facts, although I am prepared to see a gradual convergence between the two halves of the Empire. Some doctors are wealthy, friends of emperors, and local worthies, but, in general, they derive their social prestige from that of their patients, not their art *per se*. In a despotism like Rome, access to the despot gave power and wealth, whatever the legal status of the individual. Leaving aside the doctors of the court, I can find little evidence for wealth or social activity by doctors in the western half of the empire as compared with that in the East. Even if one makes allowance for the greater number of inscriptions recording civic activities in Asia Minor than in Italy, the overall pattern remains. At the level of the local council or the local religious organization, Roman doctors are less in focus than their counterparts in the Greek East. Dynasties of doctors are rare, and hence, too, that long-standing link with the public activities of one town: only Velia, with its Ouliads, can parallel Heraclea Salbace, let alone Cos with the Asclepiads, and significantly, Velia was a Greek colony in Greek Italy. Even after two or three centuries, the doctor in Rome and Italy was primarily an outsider.

Secondly, opinions about doctors as friends or confidants must be treated with great caution, and can hardly be taken to say more than that successful doctors were, on the whole, liked. This banal conclusion may, perhaps, be avoided by a detailed comparison between doctors and other occupational groups, lawyers, architects or schoolmasters, for example, but, even here, it is doubtful what precision could be achieved other than that the doctor fell somewhere in the middle between a wealthy landowner and a peasant, although the social profile of lawyers seems to me to have been considerably higher than that of physicians.

Kudlien, on the whole, rejects conclusions drawn from epigraphic evidence that point to this split between East and West. But he is less critical of his literary evidence. The frequency of woolworkers and tax-collectors in catalogues of abuse should cause one to hesitate before declaring Thessalus to be of low status on Galen’s prejudiced evidence. Neither, given Galen’s father’s association with provincial big-wigs and, if the Arabic biographers are right, Galen’s grandfather’s activities as president of one of the guilds of Pergamum, is it at all likely that Galen was a non-citizen. By his day, citizenship was common among the councillors and landowners of his province, and the example of Plutarch, whose Roman name is known to us only from the chance find of an inscription, casts doubt on Kudlien’s hypothesis.

This is not to say that the doctor might not be a cut above the farm labourer, especially after the Triumvirs *c.* 41 BC had granted all doctors everywhere certain tax privileges, but the levels of assumed competence, social acceptability and financial gain might be so different that they can hardly be encompassed under the same rubric, or, if they are, that rubric becomes almost meaningless. Mme Gourevitch in *Le triangle Hippocratique* (1984) assembled a great mass of literary evidence; Professor Kudlien has carefully guided us through the various legal statuses that a doctor might possess. What is now needed is a much more careful examination of some of the theoretical suppositions involved in any attempt to understand the place of the doctor in Roman society. Then we may break out of the shackles imposed by the preconceptions of a Cato or an elder Pliny.

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ROBERT S. GOTTFRIED, *Doctors and medicine in medieval England, 1340–1530*, Princeton, NJ, and Guildford, Surrey, Princeton University Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. xvi, 359, illus., £30.00.

Robert Gottfried describes this, his fourth book, as “a study of English doctors and medicine from the Black Death to the foundation of the Royal College of Physicians” (p. 3). Until now, he says, “there has been no attempt to present a systematic, synthetic view, either of the practice of medicine or the nature of medical practitioners. And”, he adds, “many of the specialized studies have been based more on theories than on the analysis of evidence” (pp. 6–7).

He is equally critical of the scholarly standards of medieval medical writers, whose texts he labels as “gobbledygook” (p. 56) and “nonsensical treatises” (p. 7) that were simply “derivative of traditional authorities” (p. 174). The work of even the “competent and trustworthy” barber-surgeon Thomas Vicary, for example, was merely “a re-hash, and often an incorrect one, of earlier ideas” (p. 167).

The same could be said of this book. Many of its arguments are based on unsupported assertions; it is heavily dependent on a handful of secondary sources (especially C. H. Talbot and E. A. Hammond’s *Medical practitioners in medieval England*, 1965; Talbot’s *Medicine in medieval England*, 1967; and R. T. Beck’s *The cutting edge*, 1974); and it is riddled with errors of understanding, interpretation, logic, and fact.

Gottfried’s principal theme is the “discrediting” of physicians in post-plague England, because of their “inability to cure plague or even assuage the pains of those who were afflicted”. In contrast, Gottfried says, the same period saw the rise of the surgeons and barber-surgeons because of their “hands-on practice that physicians had forsworn” (pp. 3, 55, 273, 279).

As evidence for this, he cites snippets of medieval literature that, he claims, derogate physicians and compare them unfavourably with surgeons. In fact, the material he cites seldom supports his argument. He states, for example, that the following passages distinguish between the “success” of the surgeons and the “failure” of the physicians: “Then a surgeon, by leave of and voice of all present who were wise, rose up and spoke . . .”; “And also she had her medicine and surgeons for to heal and medicine all such as were needed”; and “And the masters of medicine and the surgeons also” (pp. 64–65).

Gottfried asserts that the “most important” factor in the “rise of surgery” was the French wars, because they enabled surgeons to “dissect bodies without interference” in order to “learn anatomy properly” (pp. 3–4, 130–131, 241–243). However, he cites no evidence for what English military surgeons actually did in France, so readers must take these statements on faith.

As his second major theme, Gottfried tells us that medieval English medical practitioners underwent a process of “*embourgeoisment*” [*sic*] and “professionalization” in the two centuries following the Black Death, and that “the professionalization of medicine was crucial to the rise of the middle class” (pp. 260, 263, 277). However, most of Gottfried’s argument for this rests on an unpublished prosopographical file, so readers must also take these assertions (including most of ch. 7) on faith.

When Gottfried does cite his sources, it frequently is clear that he has either misunderstood or disregarded them. A vivid example of this is to be found in his discussion of the company hall of the London barbers (pp. 28–29). Sidney Young, in his *Annals of the Barber-Surgeons of London* (1890, p. 28), wrote that the earliest reference to the barbers’ hall is in a list of company halls in Harl. MS 541 (no folio reference). Young dated the list to 1381 and printed the relevant entry, which merely states that the barbers’ hall is in the parish of St Olave, Silver Street. He added that this hall probably occupied the same site as the modern hall (in Monkwell Street, in the ward of Cripplegate). J. Dobson and R. M. Walker (*Barbers and barber-surgeons of London*, 1979, p. 77), following Beck (‘The halls of the barbers . . .’, *Ann. R. Coll. Surg. Eng.*, 1970, 49: 15–16), correct the date of the list in Harl. MS 541 to the reign of Richard III, and report that in 1422–3 the barbers, as yet without a hall of their own, hired the brewers’ company hall on nine occasions. Philip Jones, in his *Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls, 1458–1482* (1961, p. 90n), dates the barbers’ purchase of the site to 1440 and the building of their hall to 1440 × 1475.

Gottfried’s synthesis of these accounts is as follows:

In the course of the [fourteenth] century, the barbers developed a profitable sideline: they became landlords. In 1381 they acquired a hall on Silver Street, in St. Olav’s Ward, and began renting it out. Sometime in the fifteenth century they acquired a second hall, on Monkswell Street in Cripplegate Ward. Both were available to anyone who could pay the hiring fees. Many London companies did this, but the barbers seem to have done it more than most. In 1422–1423, for example, the hall on Silver Street was rented at least nine times, and became an important source of income for the company.

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Gottfried compounds his errors by citing as his sole source for the first two sentences of this passage not Young, but Harl. MS 541 (no folio reference). If he has indeed used this MS, why has he followed Young's erroneous dating, and why has he not supplied the folio reference (f. 226r)?

This pattern of giving recapitulations—often garbled—of standard secondary sources, and presenting them, by implication, as the product of original research is repeated again and again throughout the book. Another example is to be found in Table 4.3 (pp. 160–161), a list of surgeons who took part in Henry VIII's French expedition of 1513–14, together with their monthly wages, the ships they served on, the numbers of soldiers, mariners, and gunners on each ship. In n. 222 (p. 159) Gottfried states that Table 4.3 has been “assembled from PRO, Exchequer Accounts E101/56/10”. He repeats this citation in nn. 229–231 (p. 162).

Now it happens that every one of those surgeons, with their monthly wages and the names of their ships, is listed by Talbot and Hammond, and, in fact, Gottfried's list largely follows Talbot and Hammond's idiosyncratic alphabetical ordering. Talbot and Hammond also cite “PRO, Exchequer Accounts E101/56/10” as their source. This, however, is a defective citation, because E101/56/10 contains eight bundles of documents, each with dozens of pieces. The information on the surgeons is to be found only in bundle 3. Thus, the citation *should* read E101/56/10/3. Moreover, none of the eight bundles of E101/56/10 contains a list of the soldiers, mariners, and gunners who served on the ships. That information is printed in the *Letters and Papers . . . of Henry VIII*, vol. 1, pt. 2, no. 2842, pp. 1235–7, which cites as its source the State Papers of Henry VIII, vol. 8, f. 111.

If Gottfried himself has used E101/56/10, why does he repeat Talbot and Hammond's incomplete reference, and why does he attribute to this source information that it does not contain?

Gottfried also reveals serious deficiencies in his ability to understand medieval texts in their original languages. See, for example, the hash he makes (pp. 20, 57, 63) of three short, straightforward French entries in the *Rotuli Parliamentorum*. I have spotted only one Latin quotation (p. 272), but that, too, seems to have been misunderstood. The titles of Latin works that Gottfried cites contain so many errors of spelling and grammar that they also imply that he is unfamiliar with the language.

Gottfried's translations of passages in medieval English often reduce them to gibberish. For example, on p. 59 he cites the following complimentary description of Mercury from the Scots poet Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*:

Doctour in phisik, cled in scarlot gown,
And furrit weill, as sic ane aucht to be,
Honest and gude, and not ane word could le.

Gottfried, attributing this passage to “Chaucer, *The Testament of Cressida*”, believes it to be highly critical of physicians, and translates it as follows:

Doctor in phisic, clad in scarlet gown
And furred well, as sic and ought to be
Honest and good, and not would any world would care he.

Similar mistranslations appear on pp. 60, 61, 62, 70–71, 75, 88, 89, 90, 185, and 233.

Why would Gottfried publish unintelligible nonsense like this? There seem to be only two possible explanations. Either he believes that medieval literature, as well as medieval scientific writing, was simply “gobbledygook”, and therefore is properly translated as gibberish; or else he is unaware that his translations are gibberish. In either case, he evidently is unable to read medieval English.

In sum, this book is largely a jumbled and error-ridden conflation of secondary works. The author, while repeatedly citing original manuscripts as his sources of information, demonstrates an inability to comprehend medieval texts even in printed editions. The book is thoroughly unsound, and it is astonishing that a distinguished university press should have published it.

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